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SOME NEGATIVE PREFIXES IN ENGLISH

Some years ago I taught English to the Air Force and used a work book which told all that one needs to know about prefixes in one easy lesson. I was not satisfied with it and omitted that lesson entirely as the lesser evil. Then I began to think about the matter and arrived at some notions implicit in that and other work books— notions which seem to me mistaken. There are five of them and I shall discuss them in turn, with principal reference to the Greek prefix which appears in English as *a-* or *an-*, the Latin prefixes *dis-* and *in-*, the English prefix *un-*, and by exception, the English suffix *-less*. Incidental reference will be made to a few others. I have probably raised more questions than I have answered, and all I have to say will be familiar to many of you.

The first mistaken idea about prefixes is that they are always easy to recognize. Yet often what look to be prefixes are not prefixes at all. The initial *a-* of *acolyte* and *amoeba* might be, but is not, the *a-* privative of Greek. *Dismal* is from *dies mali*, *day of misfortune*. The *mis-* of *misanthrope* is from Greek *μισέω*, *to hate*; the *mis-* of *miscellaneous* is from Latin *misceo*, *to mix*.

Prefixes often appear in contracted or assimilated forms. So with the name of the inert gas *argon*, where the *a-* privative of Greek combines with the initial *ε-* of *ἄργον* to give *ἀργός*, *lazy*, whence *argon*, the *not working* gas. More obvious are the assimilations of *in-* in *ignorant*, *illiterate*, *impregnable*, and the student favorite

irregardless, and of *dis-* in *diffident*. Forms assumed by assimilation can readily be learned but must usually be taught.

Again, it is sometimes hard to tell where the prefix ends and the root word begins. So with *ab-* in *abominable*, *ad-* in *adulterate*, and *ana-* in *anachronism* and *analysis*. The cook's pardonable confusion of an iceman with a nice man is not without parallel in language.

Lastly, prefixes sometimes appear so changed as to be unrecognizable, as *dis-* in *develop*, and the *dis-* of *dismay*, which is not *dis-* at all but a corruption of *ex-*.

The second mistaken idea about prefixes is that something recognizable is left when one is taken off. One so readily assumes that a negative word has been formed in modern times from a positive word still current in a sense corresponding to that of the negative. Such an assumption is often wrong. *Abyss* means a *something bottomless*, but there is no *byss* in English. *Adamant* is a *something untameable*, and the same word appears in a corrupt form as *diamond*. *Amorphous* means *formless*, the root appearing in *morphology* and many other words. *Anacoluthon* means a *not following*, and is to grammar what a *non sequitur* is to logic; *anonymous* means *nameless* and belongs to the *homonym-antonym-pseudonym* family. The crowning irony is *atom*, which means a *something indivisible*; the root, which means *cut*, appears in *tnesis*, and *tome*, and *microtome*.

Among borrowings from Latin, *ignorant*, from *in-* and *gnarus*, has no English positive; *inanity*

had no living positive even in Latin, though the *in-* is probably the negative prefix. The positive of *indignant* appears in English as *deign* (to do something). *Immune*, now associated with *freedom from disease*, once meant *freedom from* that most prevalent and virulent of all *diseases* save death, that is, *taxes*, an idea now expressed by *tax-free*, as in *tax-free securities*. *Securities* itself, by the way, contains the rare negative prefix *se-* and is a major insult flung by language at the human race, since it should mean *things involving no worry!* *Integer* means *untouched*; another form of the root appears in *tangent*. *Infant* means *not speaking*, derived I suppose by contraries from their habit of doing little else. The opposite of *diffident* is *confident*, and of *dissuade* is *persuade*. *Disgust*, itself perhaps formed in Italian, may be contrasted with the Italian-derived *gusto*, both ultimately from the Latin meaning *taste*. *Unkempt* means literally *uncombed*; the positive is familiar in the German *kämmen*, found in *Die Lorelei*.

All the words from *abyss* to *unkempt* have been in the language for centuries, though the present meaning of *immune* is modern. Nearly all of them were formed in Greek or Latin and then borrowed by English as units. Since modern English did not put these words together, it cannot take them apart and have anything sensible left.

Again, when one takes off a negative prefix, one may have left an English word which is rare, obsolescent, or obsolete. In many such cases the negative word was not formed from the positive in English but borrowed ready-made from French or Mediaeval Latin. *Maculate*, *spotted*, is now used only as an antithesis to *immaculate*. *Immediate* has a positive *mediate*, now rare, as in: 'He started as an instructor and after holding several mediate positions was promoted to be head janitor.' We talk of *incorrigible* as a deviation from an assumed norm of *corrigible*, which we are supposed to correct without mentioning. The present opposite of *innocent* is *guilty*, not *nocent*. We may, but usually don't, call some food *insipid*, but we don't speak of the *sapid* grapefruit we had this morning. Armies and

people are supposed to be *invincible*; apparently the positive *vincible* was made from the negative as a tardy admission of unpleasant fact. We have *uncouth* and *unconscionable*, but *couth* and *conscionable* are obsolete. We are fully aware of *ruthless* and vaguely aware of *ruthful*, but *ruth* is usually a girl. *Feckless* is from *feck*, Scotch for *effect*; *feckless* means *ineffectual* and is applied to a person with no gumption.

In the cases we have just discussed, positive and negative have gone their separate ways, the positive to oblivion or near it, the negative to an established position of more or less familiar use. We have other words for the positive ideas. The negative compounds must be learned as unit ideas, since reference to the positive may only complicate matters.

A third mistaken idea about prefixes, especially negative prefixes, is that they all work alike and are definitely either living or dead. The facts are much more complicated.

The *a-*privative appears in present use as *a-* or *an-* and does not coalesce with a following vowel, but it was not always so, as we saw in the case of *argon*. It is attached mostly to words of Greek and Latin origin, because it appears mostly in old borrowings or scientific coinages; so, *agnostic*, *anemia*, *anopheles* (the *not-so-helpful* mosquito), *asexual*, *atypical*, and the scientific paragon *anociassociation*.

The Latin negative prefix *in-* meaning *not* is often confused with the prefix *in-* meaning *in* or *on*. As a living prefix it is assimilated to *il-*, *im-*, and *ir-*. It is usually, but not always, prefixed to words of Latin origin: so, *illegible*, *immoderate*, *inadequate*, *irrational*. Among numerous exceptions are *illogical*, *impolitic*, and *impracticable*, from Greek, but the Anglo-Saxon prefix *un-* is more common in words borrowed from Greek, as in *unethical*, *unphilosophical*, *unmethodical*. *Dis-* is a living prefix only in the negative sense and as a living prefix appears only in that form; so in *dislike*, *disgrace*, *distrust*, *dishonor*. Yet *dis-* also occurs in dozens of English words taken from Latin as compounds, and it is then assimilated, as in *differ* and *dilapidated*. The following account of its meaning in Latin is

taken from a senior examination paper written this March by Gladys Levine, of Cos Cob, Connecticut. She was discussing the form 'dis-soluant' in Lucretius: '*dis- in all directions; solvo, untie*'; the net result of these two elements is the same as that of a good eraser.' So, also, in *dissipate, digest, diffuse, disrupt*.

The Anglo-Saxon suffix *-less* poses no problems other than those posed by any negative affix. It is not much used, but may be attached to any English noun or verb, no matter what its origin, whether Greek, as in *baseless*, Latin, as in *useless* and *motionless*, or Anglo-Saxon, as in *fatherless*, *needless*, *hopeless*, and *sleepless*. Perhaps the most familiar negative prefix is the Anglo-Saxon *un-*. It is not assimilated and is attached freely to all kinds of words: Old Norse *undying* and *unhappy*; Anglo-Saxon *unwell* and *unfriendly*; Latin *uncommon* and *unnatural*; Greek *unorthodox* and *unchurched*.

The most important thing to remember about all living negative prefixes is that they have been living a long time. Negative compounds now in English may have originally been formed in Greek or Latin or French or Middle English or in the English of yesterday or today. Hence, both the negative compound and the root word that appears in it may have changed their meaning, and often in very different ways.

The fourth mistaken idea about prefixes, especially negative prefixes, is that they change the meanings of words in ways that are definite, invariable, and easily learned. A corollary of this misconception is the idea that a negative compound always has a positive counterpart.

We have names for deviations from normal states, which, being normal, are unnamed. Most people have equals; one who does not is *peerless*. It is normal for a child to have a father; one who has lost him is *fatherless*. Almost any one has, or can get, a penny; one who cannot is *penniless*; a *sleepless* night is the exception; a *windowless* building is unusual. Most people can make up their minds, in time; those who can't have *aboulia*. Most people can talk—too many do—; when they lose the power to talk they suffer from *aphasia*. *Amnesia* is chronic among students, especially at examination time.

The word *illiteracy* dates from 1660; its positive counterpart *literacy* from 1883. The idea that *literacy* needed a name came about the time when it was decided that citizens in a democracy would better be able to read and write.

Very often, too, both positive and negative mark deviations from a norm which does not require comment. The *noiseless* breathing of a dying man does not mean that normal breathing is *noisy*. Lord Peter Wimsey's chin is 'shaved to perfection, *hairless*, epicene.' 'The *Hairy Ape*' is so by comparison with a norm, as is Lord Peter's *hairless* chin. A *seedless* orange may have one or two seeds and still be within the law; a *seedy* orange has too many, like poor Persephone's pomegranate. A person is called *logical* or *illogical* only when he displays a conspicuous presence or absence of the ability to think straight. So, too, we tend to call a person *mature* or *immature* only when his degree of maturity is out of step with his years. It should not be, but sometimes is, a compliment to call a girl *modest* or a teacher *impartial* or a critic *impersonal*. So a person is called *capable* or *incapable* because of an excess or defect of capability, since the normal amount calls for no comment.

The most interesting and difficult problems are presented by hundreds of pairs of words which are apparently but not actually opposites. Either of the pair may be more than one part of speech and one may have a field of meaning that corresponds only in part to the field of meaning of the other.

Anesthetic is not the negative of *aesthetic*. *Apathetic* was originally a term in the Stoic philosophy, which regarded suppression of the emotions as a virtue. It is clearly not the opposite of *pathetic*, as an *apathetic* person is a *pathetic* spectacle in the eyes of crusaders. *Caudal* means *having to do with a tail*; *acaudal* means *not having one*. *Aclinic* means an imaginary line near the equator where the magnetic needle does not dip; *clinic* is a place where the wealthy poor forgather to gyp the doctors. *Aëdes*, the *not-so-sweet* mosquito, carries yellow fever; the root word appears positively in *hedonism*, an over-valuation of sweets, spiritual

and otherwise. *Atonic* does not mean the lack of a *tonic*, though in one sense it may be caused by the lack of it.

There are many more cases where the Latin prefix *in-* does not produce the result one might expect. The obvious reason is that the words are more common and have usually been longer in the language. *Impartial* negatives *partial* in one sense, but *total* matches *partial* in another sense. *Passive* and *impassive* are synonyms, not opposites. A man may be at once an *entity* and a *nonentity*. A teacher may be *patient* or *impatient*, but a *patient* is often *impatient*. A *pertinent* remark may be made by an *impertinent* person. *Capacity* is not always the opposite of *incapacity*. *Constant* interruptions are worse than *occasional* ones, but *constant* wives are usually preferable to *inconstant*. *Continent*, noun, is not the opposite of *incontinent*, adjective. *Commode*, noun, differs from *incommode*, verb. *Dignity* does not pair off with *indignity*, or *difference* with *indifference*, or *disposed* with *indisposed*, or *sensible* with *insensible*, or *tact* with *intact*, or *valid* with *invalid*, or *count* with *discount*, or *appoint* with *disappoint*, or *grace* with *disgrace*, or *engaged* with *disengaged*, or *ease* with *disease*, or *erring* with *unerring*, or *easy* with *uneasy*.

Some of the above pairs and many others are opposites in part of their meanings, but not in the rest of them. Yet there remain hundreds of pairs which are opposites in most of their meanings, and with them even a very little knowledge of negative prefixes is a great help.

Such are *dying* and *undying*; *injured* and *uninjured*; *willing* and *unwilling*; *happy* and *unhappy*; *true* and *untrue*; *like* and *dislike*; *agree* and *disagree*; *approve* and *disapprove*; *convenient* and *inconvenient*; *appropriate* and *inappropriate*; *possible* and *impossible*; *regular* and *irregular*; *catalectic* and *acatalectic*; *cyclic* and *acyclic*; *aphrodisiac* and *anaphrodisiac*; *symmetrical* and *asymmetrical*.

A fifth mistaken idea is that negative prefixes are more or less interchangeable standard parts like spark plugs or mowing-machine knives. Sometimes and apparently; rarely in fact. If

the meaning is alike, the stylistic effect is different. Compare the following scraps of poetry: *κυμάτων ἀγήριθμον γέλασμα*, 'unnumbered laughter of waters'; 'the sand which is by the seashore innumerable'; 'Man's inhumanity to man/Makes countless thousands mourn'; 'await alike the inevitable hour'; 'the dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear'; 'Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest'; 'They kept the noiseless tenor of their way'; 'with uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked'; 'to be a brother to the insensible rock'; 'all the infinite host of heaven'; 'the innumerable caravan that moves'; 'with sure, unslackened stride'; 'Death, the undiscovered country'.

Just suppose I knew—and you would hear—all the truth about prefixes, or suffixes, or any theory of words soever. We should still be only at the edge of the matter. The meaning of a word is the sum of all the contexts in which it can sensibly stand. A man who uses words in new contexts and wins acceptance is a great stylist; if he does not win acceptance, he is misunderstood, or else, just odd.

In the end we must learn words one by one, in as many contexts as possible, by listening and reading and talking and writing. Yet words, after all, are only clothes a man puts on his world. A man who knows nothing about words as words doesn't know much, but a man who knows about words only as words, and knows his world through words alone, doesn't know much either. Can one experience through words the smell of hydrogen sulphide, or the taste of an avocado pear, or the sound of wind in pines, or the touch of polished wood, or the sight of a sunset over Lake Champlain? Can one learn, from a dictionary, the meaning of love, or hate, or pain, or joy? The study of words is like an income; a scholar can live neither within it nor without it.

NOTE

This paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of New England, held at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., on March 28th and 29th, 1947.

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THE SURVIVAL OF THE CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

The interesting article by the late Ethel H. Brewster, 'The Place of Latin in the Post-War Curriculum,' in Volume 40, Number 3 of *The Classical Weekly* (October 28, 1946), has given rise to this humble attempt to clarify somewhat the problem of whether the classical languages will survive in the curricula of our secondary schools and colleges by cutting through the voluminous literature now extant and reducing it to what seems to me the basic issue. Having taught Latin and Greek for some time in European high schools and in a preparatory school in this country, and having taught ancient history, Greek and Roman antiquities, and epigraphy in European universities, I have naturally been concerned with this rather complex problem and have followed with interest the literature and discussions, public and semi-public which it has prompted. What most amazes the student of the problem is the multitude and the disparity of the arguments proffered by the advocates of the classical languages, who only too often seem to forget how dangerous a thing it is to link one or a few really good arguments with arguments which are weak, irrelevant, and quite often outside the scope of the general public who will, in the long run, by sheer weight of numbers decide the question of whether or not Latin and Greek are doomed in our schools. Very often secondary arguments, correct as they may be from the ideological point of view, tend to cloud the problem, and, unwisely used, may give the dangerous impression that a small clique is trying to 'high-hat' the average citizen in its own interest.

As far as I can see, the basic argument against the teaching of the classical languages has always been of a definitely utilitarian nature. Since they can hardly be put to any immediate practical use by the average student, the question as to why they should be taught has been often posed: (a) by irate parents who do not understand why their little darlings should be tortured by and waste their time on 'dead' languages instead of going in for more practical, and perhaps 'easier' subjects; (b) by teachers who sincerely believe

that those dead languages are less important than the subjects which they teach, and therefore quite logically want to make more room for the latter by trying to push the classics into the background, or, if they are fanatics, to kill them off without mercy; (c) by persons who have never been exposed to either Latin or Greek, from which fact they gaily assume their right to sneer at and to fight them; (d) last, but not least, by those who have actually studied them, but do not feel that they have derived any appreciable benefits. Of course, the last group is the most dangerous; the former students of the classical languages can justly claim to speak from bitter experience and out of their ranks may rise the headmasters and college presidents of the future.

In the following discussion, I will restrict my arguments to Latin, for if it can be saved and securely anchored once more in the curriculum of our schools, successful salvage operations could easily be started for Greek.

I hold that, since the main argument against Latin springs from utilitarian considerations, it must be met on the same plane; the question is only one of strategy. Purely negative arguments, correct as they may be, do not seem sufficiently effective; one could easily elaborate on the fact that successful business executives do not necessarily have to know anything about physics, that a librarian can well do without higher mathematics, that a good mechanic needs no particular knowledge in geology or botany, that a good clergyman can be a good clergyman without any special training in geometry. And still all these subjects seem to pass as quite necessary in the eyes of the general public. The question must be approached differently.

There is hardly anybody who would seriously doubt that the study of languages constitutes an integral part of any sound and general education. Of course, for the utilitarian mind, only modern languages will count; yet there is a flaw in the logic of those who advocate the study of modern languages for practical purposes. For considering more closely the so-called 'practical' purposes which inspire the cry for modern languages in our schools and colleges, one cannot help but wonder what may be the actual percentage of those who ever read books, periodicals, or news-

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papers written in a modern language which they have studied; who ever write letters; who ever have an opportunity of trying to converse with the autochthons. I feel quite sure that statistics would show that the percentage is by far too small to support any utilitarian argument. After finishing their studies, students forget French, Spanish, and German as readily as they do Greek and Latin. I should hate to be misunderstood: I, personally, firmly believe that it is highly advisable and most important to master as many modern languages as possible; the many and various benefits derived from their study are too obvious to be mentioned here. But I strongly feel that somewhere one has to make a stand against the wrong argument that is adduced to prove the right thing. Even if the so commonly overestimated 'practical' purposes of the study of modern languages were reduced somewhat, the fact remains that they are of the highest educational value. However, there is much more to the study of languages than meets the eye; it is not only a question of being able to read foreign books, periodicals, and newspapers, or to correspond and converse with the natives of foreign lands. The very process of learning another language most definitely influences and forms the mind in more than one way. It is not only that the student, forced into a greater awareness of his own tongue by the digesting of a foreign vocabulary and the acquiring of a new syntax with its different ways of expressing familiar thoughts, will be lifted up to a plane on which he becomes more conscious of the logical operations of his own language; he will as well become conscious of his own thinking, and will finally free his mind from the innumerable clichés which, unthinkingly, he has acquired during the most formative period of his life, the time when he learned to speak. Thus the study of any foreign language will vastly contribute to that formal training of the mind, which is one of the most important, if not the most important aim of all education. It should be realized more clearly that the study of languages and of mathematics, strangely disparate as they may seem to be, meet on this common platform, laying the foundation for logical thinking and abstraction which enable

man to pass safely from the particular to the general and to descend without mishap from the latter to the former. It may be noted here that the contribution made by the study of languages in this respect is commonly much underrated. There is, however, a great difference between language and language, unerringly recognized by students who invariably classify Greek and Latin as 'difficult' languages as compared with other 'easier' ones. It goes without saying that the farther a language is removed from one's own, the more difficult it will be to acquire its vocabulary, to become acquainted with its different ways of declension and conjugation, and finally to master its syntax. But on the other hand, the harder a language is, the more benefits will be derived from its study for the formal training of the mind, for bringing out more clearly, developing and exercising the individual's innate power of abstraction. It is not so much the new vocabulary that counts, but the structural differential (to paraphrase the German term 'Transpositionsspannung') which necessitates mental operations of great complexity, forcing the mind, like no other mental processes, to apply a different 'linguistic' logic to express a given thought in the other language. This is not the place to go into the details of trying to unfold the complicated problem of the mental reaction to the impact of a language with a great structural differential. However, I am sure that the basic issue has been made clear; that, apart from its other aspects, it lies also on the plane of utilitarian argumentation. It is beyond any doubt that the structural differential between English and Latin is by far greater than that between the former and any of the Romanic languages, also greater than that between English and German. Therefore, from the technical and utilitarian point of view, Latin ought to be the backbone of the study of languages; this contention is very well in keeping with the old experience that previous training in Latin facilitates to no small degree the study of modern languages. To anticipate a rather obvious argument, there are quite a few languages and linguistic groups which are still further removed from English; e.g., any of the Semitic, or to go

even farther, any of the agglutinative languages, will show a greater structural differential than Latin. That we still choose the latter is quite clear; to mention only a few outstanding facts: it is the language that was spoken in the western part of the Roman Empire within whose boundaries our western civilization arose, firmly rooted in Greek thought and its Roman application; Latin is the mother of the Romanic languages; it was the language of the western church; it was the language of the Middle Ages; and it has either directly or indirectly contributed by far the largest proportion of words to our English vocabulary.

The conclusion from what I have tried to outline seems clear enough: it must be impressed upon the general public that the 'practical' purposes in teaching modern languages are overrated in proportion to the underrating of Latin; that the study of the latter, with its unique possibilities of contributing towards the formal training of the mind, has an eminently practical aspect. It would be wise to draw attention to the fact that the great mathematicians and scientists of the 19th century who laid the foundation for the most recent breath-taking development of the natural sciences came largely from schools the curricula of which were centered around the classical languages.

The whole problem is closely connected with the question of what we understand by and how we define the term 'general education.' The student of modern education cannot help but wonder at times if there is not a definite tendency to overestimate the mere assembling of facts at the cost of a thorough training of the mind. To be educated in the intellectual sense of the word does surely not mean to parade as a walking encyclopedia, it does not mean to hold in storage a vast amount of isolated and very often undigested facts—*πολυμαθὴν νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει*—it means to possess the (acquired) ability of the mind based on a complete coordination of one's mental processes, to group logically and harmoniously any given perceptions of a higher as well as of a lower order so as to arrive at a more or less independent interpretation of the world with its ever fluctuating changes, and to be aware of

oneself as an infinitesimal but very responsible part of mankind in the vast ocean of confusing actions and counteractions which basically influence our lives as well as form history. To be really educated means to be able to choose intelligently, to establish a hierarchy of human values which, together with the teachings of the individual's religious faith, will protect him from consciously or subconsciously yielding to the lower instincts of the human race. Education frees man from the age-old dangers of prejudice and intolerance, which go back to the same root: ignorance in the widest sense of the word. It is clear that democracy is bound to spread general education as widely as possible in order to combat the danger points from which suppression and totalitarianism arise. If it is true, and I do not doubt it for a moment, that mankind is now standing at the gates of a new age which the combined efforts of the natural sciences have thrown open, we will have to be more vigilant than ever before in protecting the freedom of the individual from the imminent dangers of the superorganization which will no doubt arise from the many changes which the atomic age is bound to bring upon us in almost every sphere of our lives. Only men and women of high moral standing, supported by a sound general education, will be able to stand their ground firmly against the many and very real dangers of the future. We all have seen how easily the evil forces of Stone-age brutality were set free by the Nazi superstate. The future needs the strength of free men and women who know when and how to fight for their liberties. This attitude cannot be achieved by persons whose minds have not been trained thoroughly: a sound general education has never in the history of democracy been more sorely needed.

I think that it is the most urgent task of those who are interested in the survival of Latin in our schools to point out to the public in general not only its high educational values, but also the fact that its study works toward an eminently utilitarian goal. To discuss the whole question in college reports, in books, in learned articles in periodicals, all of which are usually read only by those who need no further arguments to believe

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in the teaching of the classics, is meritorious in itself, but hardly furthers the cause effectively. Even the forum of P-TA's, good as it may be, seems too narrow, when we consider the dangers by which the classics are confronted, and might at times be too much exposed to local and personal controversies. I wonder if something like an *Eranos* of the friends of Latin and Greek could not be presented to the public in the form of an interesting book in which the basic issues would be discussed clearly and intelligibly not only by insiders, but also by outsiders who have no direct connection with the teaching of the classics, like clergymen, mathematicians, scientists, businessmen, physicians, and lawyers. Something quite interesting might come of the project, if it were properly organized and edited, something that would not only make good reading, but could well catch the imagination of the average citizen, who might, over night, be led to realize that all the arguments which he has heard against Latin were only pseudo-arguments which do not stand up under close examination. Public support, thus secured, would at once change the defensive, and so often defeatist, attitude of many good teachers, and a reasonable feeling of self-confidence could be restored.

We must, however, be quite clear on one important issue; we must rid ourselves of the erroneous conception that we can appease the enemies of Latin, and 'rehabilitate' it in the eyes of the student by lowering the standards and trying to make it easier from year to year: too much damage has already been done in that respect. On the contrary, we must calmly face and admit the fact that it will be always numbered among the 'difficult' subjects. What we have to achieve is a high level of proficiency. The teaching of elementary Latin, preparatory to reading Caesar, must be efficient and sober, without, however, losing itself in the deserts of mental aridity; it must be freed from all things which do not essentially belong to a thorough and systematic teaching of the language. We do not need, in our Latin texts, pictures which horrify good taste and are a steady source of distraction in class. When pictorial support seems necessary or even advisable, thousands of good photographs from

all the museums of the world are available to illustrate almost anything that requires illustration. Let us not forget that our imagination is often stimulated by the absence of illustrations. We do not need stories in 'canned' Latin either, if the Latin does not live up to the best traditions of the language; there are many hundreds of easy sentences to be found in the best classical writings which may be used in fabricating coherent narratives which can well arouse the interest of the student, in spite of the fact that they represent excellent Latin. Teachers will have to stop trying to be 'modern' in the wrong sense: a grass fire is never *Ignis in herba*, as I read not so long ago to my deep consternation. It would be well for the teacher to remember that classical Latin is indeed a dead language but one which is beautiful, however, as long as it is not made to express concepts which are entirely alien to its spirit. It would be about the same as to attempt to dress up an archaic torso to represent the genius of the Atomic Age. With or without pictorial comment, Latin can and ought to be a great and thrilling challenge to the student.

The belief that elementary Latin can be taught in one year is a dangerous heresy and has probably done more damage than all the arguments produced against the study of Latin by its bitterest enemies. I cannot believe that the average student at the high school level will be really ready after one year to read and understand Caesar. It is common experience that a student thus prepared, let us say after a semester of Caesar, when faced with an easy unseen passage will be able to give a vague translation which skims the surface only, provided he is lucky enough to guess the content of the passage; if not, his translation will be a fantastically distorted paraphrase which more often than not will entirely misconstrue the passage. And this is exactly what must be avoided at all costs. It seems that at least one year and a half of thorough grammatical training with the emphasis on translating from English into Latin is a necessary basis for a real understanding of whatever authors are included in the curriculum of any given school. The second part of that year could very well be used for the intensification of the

elementary training coupled with the reading of selections of easy pieces from Caesar or Cornelius Nepos. Any shortcut at the expense of the elementary training will only cause serious damage. With such a preparation, the reading of authors would speedily gather momentum, a greater amount of material could be read more thoroughly, and the students, freed from the dire necessity of looking up every other word and battling over rather obvious constructions, would find it more and more interesting to dig into the great and moving historical, political, economic, and artistic problems which the enormous riches of the ancient legacy unfold to those who know how to read and to interpret the masterpieces of Roman literature.

It would no doubt help tremendously if the college board examinations in Latin would return to the former system of having the student actually translate passages instead of asking questions about them. It is most appalling to see how often students with a very poor background can guess their way through the present examinations, which, learnedly and ingeniously as they may be conceived and prepared, very often turn out to be a 'field day' for guessers and gamblers.

Summing up, we can say that it is not so much the knowledge of the language and the awareness of the problems involved that are important; the formal training of the mind, as specifically provided for by the study of a language with so great a structural differential as Latin, will remain a real *κτῆμα ἐς αἰ* to the one who studies it, something that he can never lose after it has been fully absorbed and has become an integral part of his mental mechanism.

FRANCIS W. SCHEHL

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PORTSMOUTH, RHODE ISLAND

Die Geburt der Helena samt Humanistischen Schriften aus den Jahren 1943-45. By KARL KERÉNYI. 138 pp. (Zürich, Rhein-Verlag, 1945). 8 Swiss francs.

This is Heft III of the new series called *Albae Vigiliae* under the editorship of Eitrem (whose name is omitted by error), De Tolnay (of Princeton), and Kerényi. The title is somewhat mis-

leading, since the first article of twenty pages (originally published in 1939 in *Mnemosyne*) on Helen is not the most important among the nine here reprinted. It is a question whether it was worth while to republish these articles which add little to what Altheim, Cook, Deubner, Eitrem, Kern, Nilsson, Reinhardt, Robert, Rohde (not *Rhode*, as Kerényi spells the name, p. 91), and Wolters have said. The subjects of Chapters II-IX are: II. Der Geist, III. Mysterien der Kabiren. Einleitendes zum Studium antiker Mysterien, IV. Castello di Tegna. Eine archäologische Parallele zu einem Heiligtum in der Gegend von Theben, V. Die Heiligkeit des Mahles im Altertum, VI. *Mnemosyne-Lesmosyne*. Über die Quellen 'Erinnerung' und 'Vergessenheit' in der griechischen Mythologie, VII. Selbstbekenntnisse des Livius, VIII. Über das Klassische. Aus Anlass einer Sophokles-Übersetzung. IX. Grundbegriffe und Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Humanismus. Ein Brief an junge Humanisten.

The study of Helen deals only with the magic flight on which Zeus as a swan and Nemesis as a goose gave birth to Helen. Woman is the cause of all evil, *καλὸν κακόν*, symbolic, as in Shakespeare and Goethe. Feminine beauty has two possibilities, Nemesis or Aphrodite. An interesting parallel is Linda in the nineteenth-century Estonian epic, *Kalewipoeg*, but it is strange to find no account of Helen's birth from the cosmic egg, as so often occurs in art and literature. The discussion of the Cabiric sanctuary near Thebes is excellent, as it is based on Wolters-Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Thebes* (1940), a great work hardly accessible as yet in America; the frontispiece, well discussed on p. 75, shows Cabiric vases and is taken from Wolters-Bruns. But the account of the Mysteries at Samothrace shows no knowledge of the excavations of Professor Lehmann, and the account of the Eleusinian mysteries shows no knowledge of the publications of Noack, Kourouniotes, and especially of Mylonas (*Ἐλευσίς* [Athens, 1932] and *The Hymn to Demeter and her Sanctuary at Eleusis* [Washington University Studies, St. Louis, 1942]). With regard to the Lydian word *kavés* (p. 59), meaning 'priest,' there is no men-

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tion of its discovery by the Americans in several Sardis inscriptions (Buckler-Robinson, *Sardis*, VII, 1, pp. 67-69 (also VI, 1, pp. 66, 76; VI, 2, pp. 42, 44, 86). I have discussed the words *koes*, *kaves*, etc. in *AJA* XVII (1913), pp. 362 f. But Kerényi's humanistic interpretation of the Cabiric and other mysteries is excellent: 'Die Umwandlung der Männer in wahre Lebensquellen, zum Dienst des zartesten Lebendigen, des Menschen in seinem Keime, ihre Zuführung vielleicht zur frühesten, gewiss zur einfachsten Form der Humanität: das mag, nach der analysierten Gründungssage, der Sinn der Kabirenmysterien gewesen sein.'

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

The end of the book has a valuable idea, which is worth quoting: 'Wolf zu sein der Ungeistigkeit gegenüber, Schwan vor der höchsten Reinheit des Geistes. So fasste ich es damals, im Bilde der beiden symbolhaften Tiere des Gottes. Heute weiss ich, dass auch das in der Nacht sanft aufleuchtende Asklepiosantlitz eine apollinische Erscheinung ist. Wahrheit, Klarheit, und Heilung sind wurzelhaft eins. Nach ihnen strebt das Menschliche heute sehnächtiger als je, wenn es in grossen Humanismus und in den kleinen humanistischen Studien Selbsterkenntnis erstrebt.'

DAVID M. ROBINSON

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Prometheus, Die Griechische Mythologie von der Menschlichen Existenz. By KARL KERÉNYI. 82 pp. (Zürich, Rhein-Verlag, 1946). 6 Swiss francs.

This is a paper-bound monograph by the distinguished Classicist, living in Italy at Ascona on Lago Maggiore, who has published a score of important volumes on subjects in Greek mythology and religion, three in collaboration with C. G. Jung, one with Lanckoroński, and one with Thomas Mann. The monograph is Heft IV of the new series called *Albae Vigiliae* (see my review above of Kerényi, *Die Geburt der Helena*). This monograph deals mostly with Hesiod, Aeschylus, (though the author is not acquainted with E. Vandyk, *The Prometheus of Hesiod and Aeschylus* [Oslo, Dybwad, 1943]) and also with

Pindar (with German verse translations). It lays emphasis on Goethe's *Prometheus*, from which several long passages are quoted, though it does not mention Trevelyan's excellent book entitled *Goethe and the Greeks*, Cambridge, 1941 (see my long review in *CW* XXXVI, 1942, pp. 76-82). Prometheus is gnostic rather than Greek, 'kein Gott, kein Titan, kein Mensch, sondern das unsterbliche Urbild des Menschen als göttergleicher Urempörer, der Urbewohner der Erde als Gegen-Gott gesetzt.' It is a matter for regret that the different later interpretations (other than Goethe's) are not treated, and we hear nothing of Quinet, Byron, Coleridge, Voltaire, Beethoven, Shelley, Swinburne, Mrs. Browning, Lowell, Longfellow, Moody, Hewlett, Landor, Gibson, Bridges, Meredith, Dom Pedro (Emperor of Brazil), Spitteler, Horne, and many others who have been influenced by the Prometheus story. Moreover, there is only one archaeological illustration, that of the Cyrenaic or Laconian cylix in Rome showing a winged bird (an eagle rather than a vulture) pecking at the breast of the bound Prometheus. Even this is not discussed in the text. Surely the crater in Oxford, published by Beazley in an important article, 'Prometheus Fire-Lighter,' in *AJA* XLIII [1939], pp. 618-639 (cf. also *AJA* XLI [1940], p. 212) deserves consideration, since it is a rare document showing Prometheus Pyrophorus bringing fire from heaven to mankind in a stick of giant fennel (narthex).

DAVID M. ROBINSON

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Thucydides and the World War. By LOUIS E. LORD. xiv, 300 pp., 1 map. (Martin Classical Lectures, Volume XII: published for Oberlin College by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1945). \$3.50

Professor Lord has produced in this book a series of clearly written essays on Thucydides which require no special knowledge of the reader but which will repay study by the layman and professional alike. Of the eight chapters, three were delivered in the Martin Classical Lectureship which Lord held at Oberlin College in 1943; the others describe the setting of the *History* and summarize the narrative.

The original three, I (Thucydides and the Writing of History), VII (The *History*), and VIII (Thucydides and the World War), give the book its title and determine its flavour. Their liveliness of style provides many invitations to digress which Lord accepts in a witty vein. They encompass in particular the author's views on the composition of history and the validity of Thucydides' own statement that his work was written as an everlasting possession: 'If he who desires to have before his eyes a true picture of . . . the like events which may be expected to happen hereafter . . . shall pronounce what I have written to be useful, then I shall be satisfied.'

Lord, obviously basing his opinions of historical writing upon decades of wide reading, has little patience with the eccentricities and stupidities of the 'scientific' school of historians, whom he holds up to the ridicule which they have surely earned. The Greeks and the Romans, on the other hand, were not influenced by this urge towards oddity and they have left us several names which have continued through the ages to dignify history. These Lord briefly reviews.

The ancients, he finds, with the exception of Thucydides and Polybius, followed 'the Roman dictum that history is written for the purpose of the reader's enjoyment and not to illustrate or prove a thesis—*ad narrandum non ad probandum*.' This is true, however, only in a very general sense. Livy (*Praef.* 9), Caesar, and Tacitus certainly had more than the reader's enjoyment in mind.

On p. 31 the qualities of the great historian are summarized: he 'will deal with a limited period of time or a special subject; he will . . . search for . . . causes; he will set before us personalities . . . and . . . their motives; he will strive to be impartial . . . , and in his failure he will make us feel that the cause which he is driven to espouse is the cause of justice . . . ; and if he has elected to write political history, he will himself be a political figure of some importance.' These rules, formulated after an analysis of historical method, might have been drawn from Thucydides himself, who, to Lord, was the master of them all and remains so.

The chapter on Thucydides and the World War, written in March of 1943, must have formed

a stimulating lecture. To indicate the parallels between the situation of fifth-century Greece and that in which we find ourselves in this decade is a dangerous undertaking, as Lord realizes. He nevertheless accepts the challenge with a courage that is rewarding to his readers.

It is one of the marks of a good book that it will provoke questions; this is no exception. The marginalia in my own copy show some differences of opinion and some errors. Pp. 53–56, a brief account of the Confederacy of Delos and its development into the Athenian Empire, suffer from compression; the chronology is confused, and the details are inaccurate. It is implied, for example, that the free Greek cities in the Empire were forced to maintain democratic constitutions. Lord is not an admirer of Empire and in the Athenian version he is loath to recognize the virtues. To call the Athenian Empire 'predatory,' to write of the 'enslavement' of the free cities of Greece by Rome, neglects all the benefits (and they were many) that were brought to the Aigaian world by Athens, to the Mediterranean by Rome. Empire, in itself, is not of necessity an evil. In fifth-century Hellas it was the first effort on a large scale to enforce peace and to make secure communication possible. For the chaos which followed, the particularistic Greek *poleis*, to whom sovereignty meant more than peace, were as much responsible as was Athens.

I take sharpest issue with Lord over his characterization of Nikias, for whom he has little good to say. 'He kept his army on the defensive, apparently so that there might be no chance of a victory detaining him longer in Syracuse. . . . Nikias' letter . . . shows that its author was entirely without spirit, that every slight difficulty seemed to him a mountainous obstacle' (p. 148). For the first sentence there is no justification; and Lord's understanding of the letter (VII, 11–15) is radically different from mine. Nikias brings Stanley Baldwin to Lord's mind; the letter, as a grim statement of a bleak situation, is more reminiscent of 'blood, toil, tears and sweat' (not that Nikias and Churchill are to be thought of as a pair).

The Spartan rule which forbade an admiral to hold office for more than a year had its drawbacks; but it was based upon experience and

'silly' is scarcely the adjective to apply to it (p. 166). It seems hazardous to speculate about Thucydides as 'the third statesman in a triad with Themistocles and Pericles' (p. 215). His political tradition was completely different and he had little respect for the democratic form.

The usual accessories (Bibliography, Notes, and Indices), collected at the back, are efficiently executed; the proof has been well read; and the book technically matches the high quality of its fellows in the series.

The Martin lectureship at Oberlin College is one of the most distinguished appointments in the country and it is satisfying to his many admirers that Professor Lord, who assisted in the inauguration of the lectureship, should father a volume in the series. It is even more satisfying to be able to say that this book will enhance his prestige.

MALCOLM F. MCGREGOR

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

Der Tod des Herakles. Arbeitsweise und Formen der antiken Sagendichtung. By FRANZ STOESSL. 128 pages. Rhein-Verlag, Zürich, 1945.

This study attempts to trace the development of the story of Heracles' death from the pre-literary form of the legend to Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Oetaeus*. The story, as Stoessl treats it, begins with the wooing of Deianeira and proceeds through the episodes of Achelous, Nessus, Oechalia, Iole, the poisoned robe, Deianeira's suicide, Heracles' agony, and the pyre of Oeta. But it is not the legend as a product of ancient Greek folklore that interests Stoessl; for once he has conjectured the form of the story as it entered into early epic and Archilochus' poetry, he gives his attention entirely to the literary treatment of it: the innovations, elaborations, and omissions of Sophocles, Bacchylides, Ovid, and Seneca, for artistic purposes. He makes detailed analyses of the *Trachiniae*, Bacchylides 16 (15), *Heroides* 9, *Metamorphoses* 9.1-238, and *Hercules Oetaeus* (which he considers genuine), more detailed actually than his thesis warrants.

He holds that in the pre-Sophoclean legend Deianeira had full knowledge of the nature of the poison that Nessus had given her and in-

tended to murder Heracles when she sent the robe to him. Furthermore, she hated Heracles from the first, had preferred Achelous, and willingly accepted the Centaur's advances at the Evenus. It was Sophocles, he maintains, who introduced and established the innocent Deianeira, who cried for help when Nessus attacked her, accepted his poisoned blood as only a love-charm, and sent Heracles the poisoned robe only to hold his love for her against Iole. While Sophocles was indebted for much to Panyasis and Aeschylus, their Deianeira was still guilty, but after Sophocles she was always innocent of intent to kill Heracles.

Stoessl points to what he considers inconsistencies or superfluities in the *Trachiniae* to prove that Sophocles' conception was superimposed upon an earlier form. Bacchylides, on a visit to Athens late in life, was influenced by Sophocles' tragedy. Ovid's *Heroides* 9 is based on the *Trachiniae*, though *Metamorphoses* 9 shows the influence of several sources. Seneca relied mainly on Sophocles.

Now, most that Stoessl has to say about the influence of Sophocles' treatment of this theme on later writers is sound enough, even obvious. But his whole theory about the guilty Deianeira and Sophocles' innovation of an innocent Deianeira is vitiated by his misunderstanding of Dio Chrysostom 60.1 f., upon which he bases his notion of the content of Archilochus' version. Dio tells us that some critics found fault with Archilochus, others with Sophocles, for their treatment of the Nessus episode. The critics of Archilochus considered him guilty of absurdity ποιούντα τὴν Δηάνειραν ἐν τῷ βιάζεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Κενταύρου πρὸς τὸν Ἡρακλέα ῥαψωδοῦσαν, while she reminds him of his encounter with Achelous, ὥστε πολλὴν σχολὴν εἶναι τῷ Νέσσῳ ὅτι ἐβούλετο πράξει. Stoessl gathers from this that Deianeira purposely kept Heracles at a distance while she was engaged with Nessus by singing a long flattering song about his exploits (ῥαψωδοῦσαν). With singular lack of humor he misses the whole point of the criticism of Archilochus. For it is obvious from this passage that Archilochus had put a long speech into the mouth of Deianeira as she called to Heracles for help. She described his victory over Achelous with considerable detail,

it seems; hence the satirical employment of *ῥαψῳδεῖν* by the critics, who said that her song went on for so long that Nessus had plenty of time to fulfill his desire. It is the sort of criticism that an overly realistic person can often make of a character's long recital at a critical moment in a play or opera. In the same passage Dio points to captious critics of Sophocles who found a certain awkwardness in the portrayal of Nessus' attack and Heracles' rescue: as Dejanaira recounts the events, Nessus made his attempt in midstream, while Heracles endangered Dejanaira's life in loosing an arrow against Nessus (*Trach.* 555-71).

But Stoessl takes *ῥαψῳδοῦσαν* seriously as a literal description of Dejanaira's speech. He actually says that she could not have been calling to Heracles for help, for 'wäre es geradezu absurd, dass eine Frau, die um Hilfe ruft, weil man ihr Gewalt antun will, eine lange Erzählung "singt"', which is exactly what the critics blamed Archilochus for doing.

Stoessl not only fails to perceive the tone of this criticism but misinterprets the Greek. He takes *βιάζεσθαι* as exactly equivalent to *βινεῖν*, which is certainly not true. *ἐν τῷ βιάζεσθαι* apparently refers to the period of struggle while the Centaur was trying to force Dejanaira to his will. Also he appears to take the *ὥστε* clause as a purpose clause, understanding that Dejanaira sang so that Nessus might have enough time to do what he wished. We have here a lapse that warns us to be careful about the little words, the particles; anyone who undertakes classical scholarship must acquire an accurate understanding of their functions. I point this out, since the author of another recent book from the Rhein-Verlag has misinterpreted particles (Paula Philippson, *Thesalische Mythologie*).

Stoessl's whole case for a guilty Dejanaira is lost, since it rests upon his misinterpretation of Dio Chrysostom 60.1 f. He is also unconvincing when he attempts to support his position from the internal evidence of the *Trachiniae*. For he holds (p. 47) that the scene, lines 663-730, wherein Dejanaira comes out of the palace in alarm and speaks of the effect that the poison has had upon the wool that she had used in applying it to the robe, was devised by Sophocles to emphasize the

innocence of Dejanaira, his own innovation in the legend, before an audience that had always thought of her as guilty; whereas, before spectators to whom Dejanaira had always been innocent, it would have been enough that she first learn of her mistake from Hyllus' message. This is poor argument, for it fails to take into account the dramatic effect gained by the introduction of an ominous event that foreshadows and leads up to the catastrophe.

Also, I cannot believe that Bacchylides was influenced in the last years of his life by the *Trachiniae* merely because there is a faint echo in the passages where Heracles makes sacrifice to Zeus Ceneas on a wave-washed shore.

Because of the shortcomings mentioned and because the book lacks both index and table of contents, I am afraid that it will prove of little aid to students of either Greek legend or of classical literature.

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(Continued from Vol. 40, page 64)

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DQ78.R5 44-52165

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES SUMMER SESSION, JULY-AUGUST 1948

The second postwar Summer Session of the School of Classical Studies will be held in Rome during the Summer of 1948. The Session will begin in the first half of July, the exact date to be determined by shipping schedules, and close six weeks later. It will again be under the direction of Professor Henry T. Rowell.

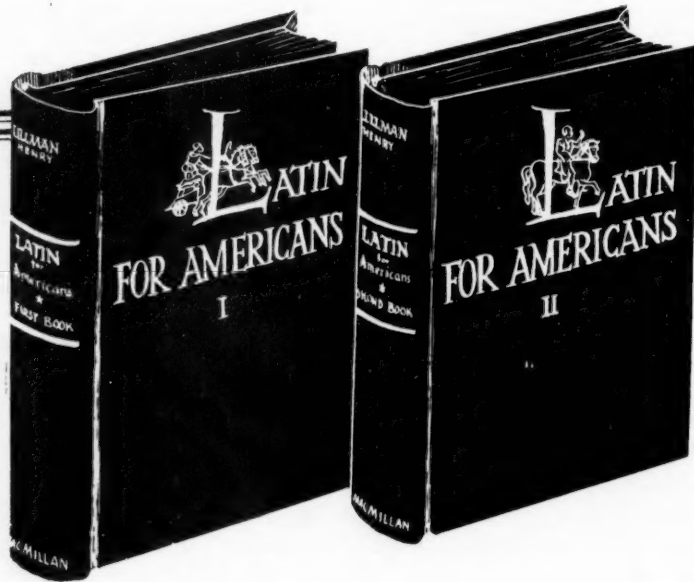
The first postwar session (1947) has now proved that classical studies can be conducted in Rome under prevailing conditions in a normal and profitable manner. Museums and monuments are open on regular schedules, transportation is available for visits to outlying sites, and the cultural activities of the city on the whole are functioning normally. The Academy will assist in obtaining suitable accommodations in Rome for the duration of the Session.

The Course will be devoted to a study of Roman civilization as exemplified in its surviving material remains in and about Rome and as portrayed in its literature. The work will be divided about equally between archaeological and literary material from the origins to Constantine. But emphasis in both will be given to the period extending from the last century of the Republic to the middle of the second century A.D. Thus the outstanding writers of Latin literature will receive particular attention. Excursions will be made to Monte Albano, Horace's Sabine Farm, Ostia, and an Etruscan site.

Enrollment will be limited to 25 students. Applications for admission must be received by the Academy's New York office not later than March 1, 1948. Basic expenses including tuition, accommodations, board, and transportation from New York and return may be estimated at \$750. Apart from scholarships which may be provided by regional classical associations or other local groups, a limited amount of scholarship assistance will be available.

Requests for details should be addressed to:

Miss MARY T. WILLIAMS, Executive Secretary
American Academy in Rome
101 Park Avenue, New York 17, New York



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